

Anti-Cavity Sodium Fluoride Gel: Instructions for use

You have been told that you are at a high risk for tooth decay. That means you either have several areas of tooth decay (cavities) or you have areas that will soon become cavities. If used properly, a 5,000 parts per million Sodium Fluoride gel product, combined with good oral hygiene and eating habits, may arrest small cavities before they require restoration and will help prevent future decay.

1. Floss your teeth every night and especially before you use the fluoride. This removes the food from between your teeth. Food will prevent the fluoride from getting to the tooth surface.
2. Brush your teeth for 2 to 3 minutes with your normal ADA approved fluoride toothpaste. Make sure you thoroughly scrub (in a circular motion) the front, top and back of each tooth. Spit out in the sink and rinse your mouth and your toothbrush.
3. Gently shake the tube of fluoride gel to thicken the gel and place a pea-size drop of the gel on your toothbrush. Brush your teeth as before for 2 to 3 minutes. Make sure you thoroughly scrub (in a circular motion) the front, top and back of each tooth.
4. Remove your brush from your mouth and swish (to push the fluoride between your teeth) the remaining gel in your mouth for 1 minute. Spit out any excess.
5. **Then go to bed. DO NOT EAT, DRINK, SMOKE, OR RINSE YOUR MOUTH.**

Fluoride is most effective if used right before bed. This allows the fluoride several hours to be incorporated into the tooth surface. Conversely, if food and sugars are left on the teeth overnight, you will greatly increase your risk of tooth decay.

Other points to remember:

- **Brush your teeth after each meal.** If you can't brush after a snack, chew a piece of sugarless gum.
- **Only floss the teeth you want to keep.** You cannot prevent tooth decay or gum disease between your teeth if you don't floss.
- **It's not what you eat or drink, but how long it stays on your teeth.** If you sip sugar (coffee, tea, regular sodas / pop, etc) or acid drinks (lemonade, diet sodas / pop, etc) all day, you will get tooth decay. It takes 20 minutes for the mouth to recover from as little as one sip of pop or other drink.
- **Tobacco promotes tooth decay.** Smoking dries your mouth out and the heat from the cigarette, pipe, and or cigar will bake the food on your teeth. This makes it harder to brush it off. Smokeless tobacco has up to 40% sweetener in it.
- **Purchase and use a Xylitol-containing sugarless chewing gum.** There are some chewing gums (Koolers, Xylifresh, etc) on the market that have xylitol at levels that will help decrease tooth decay. The simple act of chewing any sugarless gum after snacking can help decrease tooth decay because this will help remove some decay-causing plaque and promote saliva (spit).

As long as you are in the military, you are required to maintain a high state of readiness. This includes having your mouth free of dental disease. By paying attention to the above guidelines, you can

improve your oral health and avoid extensive dental work. Our goal is for you to only need a dental cleaning and exam every six months (Class 1 Dental Health).